



Sister Kateri with John Blatz, Co-Coordinator of the CRISPAZ San Antonio, TX office

Sister of Charity Kateri Koverman (1943 to 2016), Intrepid CRISPAZ Volunteer 1986-1988.

By Peter Hinde, O. Carm Co-Founder and CRISPAZ Board Member

Christians For Peace in El Salvador was only in its second year in operation when we were joined by Kateri Koverman, a Sister of Charity from Cincinnati, Ohio. She was one of five volunteers for CRISPAZ that year 1986. She stayed almost three years and with her experience and maturity helped steady the younger volunteers. By 1988 CRISPAZ had 9 other volunteers; six of them with Kateri terminated their service with CRISPAZ by the end of 1988. Others came. Crispaz did not lack for volunteers in the war years in El Salvador.

Those years (1986-88) in El Salvador Kateri worked first at the *aldea* Dolores Medina in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes in Calle Real some 9 km north of the capital San Salvador. She appreciated the work of the native Sisters there but found them too restricted. The town of Tenancingo in Cuscatlán had been bombed in 1983 and the people still needed urgent pastoral attention. She arrived there in late 1988 or early 1987. People were still returning at that time.

She met with them in what remained of the Church that itself had been bombed, severely damaged, and not repaired. She stayed with those people as they tried to put their lives back together, returning to the CRISPAZ center frequently as was the custom of the Volunteers.

So far as this author knows she seldom if ever spoke of her prior experience in Vietnam, and her successive years in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia in Africa. She had gone to Vietnam in 1970 and worked for Catholic Relief Services there. By 1974 she was in charge of an orphanage. The next year, foreseeing the victory of the North Vietnamese, the US Air Force put her in charge of lining up infants to get them on board flights out to the US. These were children of GI's and Vietnamese women whose parents were killed or simply lost in the confusion of the war.

Kateri organized a total of 350 infants on 8 successive flights before the fall of Saigon, going herself on the last flight. Friends helped her see that the crying spells she suffered were a result of "a death of a country." Still with CRS she went in 1976 for a year in Sierra Leone and another year in Ethiopia. She later learned that she suffered Post Traumatic Syndrome (PTSD) the result of her experience in Vietnam. It wasn't until 1992 that she underwent treatment on a return to Ho Chi Min City. She had accompanied the son of Vietnam friends back to Vietnam in the hopes he could there recover his identity and resolve his depression and alienation in the US.

Back in Cincinnati 1993 she set up a St. Joseph House for Veterans suffering PTSD. Soon she had a staff that she trained herself. This author as well as other CRISPAZ Board members and ex-Volunteers located in the Cincinnati area visited her to see the success of her work. She organized reunions of the families of Vietnamese adopted children at the Sisters of Charity Motherhouse in 1990, 2015 and 2016 with gatherings of 60 and more. She was given awards and special recognition over the succeeding years for these two works.

Sister Kateri died October 5, 2016 at the Charity Motherhouse.

To know more about Sister Kateri's work, see

<http://www.srcharitycinti.org/vowed/images/koverman.pdf>

http://www.srcharity.org/news_events/babylift.htm